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# More contamination at industrial park site

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The owner of an industrial park in South Plainfield has submitted a plan to pave a contaminated dirt parking lot, so that toxic substances will not be kicked up in the air by passing trucks.

The problem is not just with the parking lot, however, federal inspectors learned Thursday.

Inspectors from the Environmental Protection Agency conducted "wipe tests" on several interior walls at Hamilton Industrial Park and found potentially harmful levels of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, agency spokesman Rich Cahill said.

Some readings were as high as 680 micrograms per 100 square centimeters, Cahill said. Federal guidelines call for a cleanup when readings are higher than 10 micrograms.

There is no immediate cause for alarm, Cahill said, noting that the EPA had consulted with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, an arm of the federal Centers for Disease Control.

"They looked at this data and said it wasn't an acute threat, more of a long-term problem," the EPA spokesman said.

PCBs can cause skin and eye irritation and are believed to be a cause

of cancer. At least seven of the site's 15 businesses showed some evidence of contamination.

Some employees who have worked at the site for a few years say they are a little concerned, but most seemed to think the EPA and South Plainfield officials have been forthcoming.

But Tony French, owner of a precision sheet metal shop called Fab Tech, said he was surprised to learn of the contamination this year.

"One of the questions we asked the landlord was if there were any problems, and we were told no," said French, who has been a tenant for three years.

Still, he said he wasn't too concerned. "We've been told it's at the lower end of any panic stage," French said.

The site owner, DSC of Newark Corp., submitted a plan May 10 to pave the driveway and parking lot behind the complex. Paving is expected to begin in June, Cahill said. A company official was not available for comment Friday afternoon.

Cornell-Dubilier Electronics Inc., the former owner believed responsible for much of the contamination, also has agreed to help out, said Ellyn

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Weiss, a Washington, D.C., attorney who represents the firm.

State environmental officials have known for 10 years about contamination at the 25-acre site, located at Hamilton Boulevard and Spicer Avenue. Nearby homes, whose families which had been using well water, were connected to the municipal water system for safety.

Last summer, the EPA discovered the problem was far worse than originally thought. At some locations, the levels of PCBs are thousands of times higher than what is generally considered safe. Lead and cadmium also are present in the soil.

Further investigation will include testing water, fish and sediment samples from nearby New Market Pond, as the area is used by some for fishing.

The EPA is still studying the site to see whether it merits inclusion on the Superfund national priorities list. If it is does, a more comprehensive approach to the problem will be taken, Cahill said.